

girit voice achieves an unprecedented level of universality that is a welcome and refreshing change to the provincial isolation of Indo-Fijian writing. His skill in deploying and adapting metrical rhythms and traditional forms squarely situates Fiji poetry in the Western canon and brings the Pacific into mainstream recognition as a force in literature. *The Loneliness of Islands* thus makes for an interesting comparison to similar experiments undertaken by Derek Walcott in the Caribbean and by Seamus Heaney in Ireland.

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Varua Tupu: New Writing from French Polynesia, edited by Frank Stewart, Kareva Mateatea-Allain, and Alexander Dale Mawyer. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006. ISBN 978-0-8248-3019-9; xxi + 196 pages, photos, art, references, and glossary. US\$29.95.

I had the pleasure of attending, at Honolulu's Bishop Museum, one of several celebrations and launches of *Varua Tupu*, which is a special French Polynesian issue of *Mānoa: A Pacific Journal*. A large number of Hawai'i-based writers and intellectuals were also present for the celebration so that a spirit of Polynesian reconnection and excitement filled the air. Indeed one of the major sponsors for the event was the Pacific Writers' Connection. The greatest joy was getting to meet some of the writers and editors, such as Rai a Mai, Flora Devatine, Alexander Dale Mawyer, and Kareva Mateatea-Allain.

After the welcome by the Hawaiian delegation, we were shown a slide show detailing the life of Hawaiian artist Bobby Holcomb who had lived in Huahine, Tahiti, until his untimely death. His sumptuous artwork adorns the journal cover, which depicts a side close-up of an intricately tattooed man blowing on a shell to coax out a little crab. Like the carapace, the tattoo adorns the man in a divinely protective and identifying series of patterns, and the outstretched feelers and eyes of the crab in its shell reach out toward the breath that fills its shell cradled and cauled in the man's palm. This counterbalancing between natural, human, and divine elements is a feature of other work by Holcomb, such as the detail from "Ruahatu, God of the Ocean," where the god carries a stone marae or sacred temple to Huahine. The two moving and entertaining accounts of Holcomb's work and life reveal his close association with Salvador Dali. Other Holcomb images reveal a mixture of mythological and realist elements that have the daring flavor of surrealism.

The photographic essay by Michel Chansin of Fa'a'a, the largest town in Tahiti, provides the rich political and economic reality of the region. Photographs from the 2004 presidential elections, which Oscar Temaru won, show his rapturous supporters, while candid shots of the material economic conditions also manage to convey the vitality of the people and the president's work that lies ahead.

For the uninitiated, there is a useful introduction to the history and literature of French Polynesia by the editors. This anthology is a small part of a parallel universe of franco-

phone Polynesian culture, although it excludes New Caledonian Kanak writing. This anthology has been an astonishing discovery for this writer, in particular the work of poet, filmmaker, dramatist, musician, and indigenuous advocate Henri Hiro whose ideas about cultural restoration were ahead of their time. Hiro possessed the simple courage to wear the pareu or sarong everywhere he went, despite the mirth it caused, and soon others joined him. He encouraged a return to open forms of architecture inspired by traditional houses, and composed his poetry in reo Mā'ohi (Tahitian language) and French, as a means of reconnecting with ancestral strength and identity. The interview he conducted with Rai a Mai just days before his death is a moving tribute to his empowering decolonizing vision.

Since Hiro's death in 1990, women writers have been to the fore, notably expatriate novelist Célestine Hitiura Vaite; poets Rai a Mai (Michou Chaze), Louise Peltzer, and Flora Devatine; and novelists Chantal Spitz and Titaua Peu. Vaite's excerpts from her novels *Frangipani* (2004) and *Breadfruit* (2000) reveal the wit of her English prose—she is based in Australia—and the strong female leads and class consciousness that characterize her work. In this extract, the matriarch of the family, Matarena, is having a discussion about her daughter Leilani, who is also present, with a French encyclopedia sales rep:

“Oh, oui, she loves to write!”

Matarena exclaims. ‘She’s always writing, that one. She writes, she reads, she’s very intelligent. All my children are intelligent, and to think that I’m just a professional cleaner.’

“Oh, you’re a cleaner!”

“A professional cleaner,’ Matarena corrects.

“I admire professional cleaners!’ the woman exclaims. ‘My mother is a professional cleaner. I believe professional cleaners ought to be decorated!’ Matarena looks at the young woman with narrowed eyes. What’s this? she thinks. Is it to make me buy an encyclopedia set?” (143–144)

Louise Peltzer’s poetry has a finely wrought quality, even in translation: “On your grave, allow a friend to place / This modest poem of tangled flowers. / You see, this time I didn’t cry. / These few tears are just a bit of dew” (“Ta’aroari’i,” 33). The intimate lyric voice and the pathos remind me of Alistair Te Ariki Campbell’s Tongareva-centered poems, and also of the francophone worldview (in early childhood his family frequently traveled to Tahiti) that imbues his poetry despite his anglophone adulthood. The poets and writers gathered here in general collectively create exciting comparative possibilities with Oceanic compatriots who happen to speak indigenized forms of English as represented in regional journals and anthologies such as *Savannah Flames* (edited by Steven Winduo); *Nuanua* and *Lali* (edited by Albert Wendt); *Te Ao Marama* (edited by Witi Ihimaera); *Whetu Moana* (edited by Wendt, Whaitiri, and Sullivan); *Ō’iwi* (edited by Ku’ualoha Ho’omanawanui); *Niu Voices* (edited by Selina Tusitala Marsh); *Huia Short Stories* (Huia Publishers); *Storyboard* (University of Guam Press); *Raetemaot: Creative Writing from the Solomon Islands* (University of the South Pacific); and *Indigenous Encounters* (edited by

Katerina Teaiwa). Hopefully scholars will work on translating the franco-phone journal *Litterama'ohi* (edited by Flora Devatine and Rai a Mai), and the anthology *Poèmes du Pays Kanak* (Noumea) as well as translate into French more of the literature by well-known indigenous imaginative writers of English, as only a few to date are represented in French. Reading this anthology underscores that there must be many indigenous writers from the region who speak an originally colonial language other than English, and what a richly polymorphic, heterogeneous constellation of writers the region has for comparisons.

To take one example, the prose vignettes and stories by Rai a Mai, *Vai: River in a Cloudless Sky*, aligns with the early antinuclear poetry of the late (and much loved) Hone Tuwhare, using a personal rather than oratorical voice, and also with Patricia Grace's female-centered narratives. This quote from *Vai* begins with a visit by Charles de Gaulle:

"One day, a man as ferocious as the crazy King Tamatoa V comes to Tahiti. He says that we must build an airport. For one year, night and day, trucks haul rocks out of the river. They wake babies and their families. And the spirits run away.

"The man with the big nose speaks of force and power, of defense and of the bomb. He comes with other men from his country to see the bomb explode over the Pacific Islands at night. And the men, these chiefs of war, stare at the sky with their backs to the land, gazing at the beauty in the ecstasy of violence" (102).

In short, this anthology is a startling glimpse at a new (for many

English speakers) literature of the Pacific. There may be other writers who compose in reo Mā'ohi or French who are not sufficiently represented here, such as Charles Manutahi, Hubert Brémond, and Turo a Raapoto (all are mentioned in the introduction). Nevertheless, this anthology remains very moving and very encouraging for indigenous Polynesian writing in English/Reo/French, which invites further comparative work with other Pacific literatures. In the words of Henri Hiro (88), "O Maori house! / There the Polynesian men rediscover in you / Such warmth . . ."

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New Ireland: Art of the South Pacific, Saint Louis Art Museum, 15 October 2006–7 January 2007; Nouvelle Irlande: Arts de Pacific Sud, Musée du quai Branly, Paris, 3 April–8 July 2007; Welt der Schatten: Kunst der Südsee, Totenkult und Ahnenbilder aus Neuirland, Ethnologischen Museums, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 10 August–11 November 2007.

New Ireland: Art of the South Pacific, edited by Michael Gunn and Philippe Peltier. Paris: Musée du quai Branly, 2006; ISBN 978-2-915133-43-1; Milan: Five Continents Editions, 2006; ISBN 978-88-7439-369-5; 302 pages, illustrations, map, bibliography, index. Paper, US\$60.00.

Also available in French and German: €45.00.

This was one of the most comprehensive exhibitions of art from a Pacific